

УДК 301

New Linguistic Technologies in Modern Political Discourse

Anna Yu. Suslova*

*Irkutsk State Linguistic University,
Lenin st., Irkutsk, 664025 Russia*¹

Received 27.11.2008, received in revised form 17.12.2008, accepted 24.12.2008

In modern political discourse a lot of American politicians with the help of their speechwriters and political image makers use various linguistic technologies to reach their political goals through the process of persuasion or bargaining. Producing various texts of speeches, they include into them not only deep knowledge of the natural and social worlds (values, beliefs, assumptions) but also their knowledge of language whose power of influence is evident and very strong. Such technologies as the simplicity of speech (direct appeal to ordinary people), effective image-making strategies by visual and verbal language means, the creation of effective visual products of persuasion (political advertisements and cartoons) allow them to introduce socially important and culturally oriented concepts for the purpose of keeping their power and reinforcing their influence on public opinion..

Keywords: Linguistic technologies, textualized world, verbal battle.

Political discourse might be considered as the site of political struggle inasmuch as power is exercised and enacted in discourse. Power can be won, held and lost not only in physical and brutal actions of civil wars or military coups, but also in the battles of words, tones, and even styles (Chilton, 2004; Chudinov, 2006). Broadly speaking, modern politicians, despite their national identity, have some definite linguistic mechanisms of power-holders (which we call linguistic technologies). With the help of these linguistic technologies the power-holders reach their political goals through the process of persuasion or bargaining. By other words, under the term linguistic technology, we understand operating procedures, skills, techniques which are used to realize some social and political factors. A successful politician is always alert to nuance

and the finest shades of verbal meaning. In their speeches, they very often try to “textualize” the world in their own particular way (Fairclough, 1989: 85). Words and other linguistic expressions enter into many sorts of relationship in their speeches under self-control of a speaker or a professional guidance of a supporter making political discourse emotional, powerful, and very persuasive.

New linguistic technologies appeared in political discourse as a result of technological advance developments such as radio, TV, and Internet. By all these means a new era of political control appeared, which gave new opportunities for the extension, efficiency and growth of policing power. On the one hand, the use of linguistic technologies helps politicians to have a wider-targeted audience, on the other hand, a

* Corresponding author E-mail address: islu@islu.irk.ru

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politician should be very smart with every word of his/her speech as it might be crucial, and even costs him/her his/her politician's career. Everybody remembers the "verbal battle" between Nicolas Sarkozy and Segolene Royal (French election campaign). Sarkozy used better linguistic technologies; as a result, he got more votes and won the elections. After seeing the debates on TV between those two politicians, we can hardly disagree with the information given in Wikipedia¹ in the article about Segolene Royal "Royal has been widely criticized for being stronger on rhetoric than policies and being part of a trend in French politics to focus on the personality and lifestyles of politicians rather than their ideas".

So, masterfully used, linguistic technologies exert a profound effect on the character of policing.

Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first American president who started to use the mass media to talk with his nation in "fireside chats." Roosevelt's evening radio addresses helped American citizens stay informed and involved with all matters of the state. "The pirate philosophy of the Fascists and the Nazis cannot stand adversity. The military superiority of the United Nations -- on sea and land, and in the air - has been applied in the right place and at the right time"². "In addition to the monuments of the older times, we also see in Rome the great symbol of Christianity, which has reached into almost every part of the world. There are other shrines and other churches in many places, but the churches and shrines of Rome are visible symbols of the faith and determination of the early saints and martyrs that Christianity should live and become universal. And tonight (now) it will be a source of deep satisfaction that the freedom of the Pope and the (of) Vatican

City is assured by the armies of the United Nations"³. F. D. Roosevelt was a very experienced politician. Producing various texts, he included into them not only his knowledge of the natural and social worlds (values, beliefs, assumptions) but also his deep knowledge of language whose power of influence was evident for him. In the above quotations Roosevelt referred to the most important values of Americans: freedom from any aggression and conquer, symbols of democracy. Rome in contrast to British monarchy has always been for Americans a symbol of justice, democracy, and freedom. His religious beliefs are sincere and trustworthy, which, on the whole, made his speech reliable and influential. He knew how to calm down and inspire American people in critical moments. His talks on radio were accepted by people like a "kitchen talk" with relatives or friends. That was his individual strategy to generate new policies (direct appeal to ordinary people).

Decades later, Ronald Reagan^{4,5} took Roosevelt's use of mass media to a new level, making the presidency seem even more accessible. His speeches were very emotional and pathetic. "The American experiment in democracy rests on this insight. Its discovery was the great triumph of our Founding Fathers, voiced by William Penn when he said: "If we will not be governed by God, we must be governed by tyrants." Explaining the inalienable rights of men, Jefferson said, "The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time." And it was George Washington who said that "of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports." Reagan's experience as an actor on the screen and on television gave

¹ www.wikipedia.org

² Fireside Chat 25 (July 28, 1943).
<http://www.assumption.edu/users/McClymer/bedfordprototype/toc/GIBillChat.html>

³ <http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat29.html>

⁴ R. Reagan, *The Evil Empire*,
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ronaldreaganevilempire.html>

⁵ R. Reagan, (Speech. October 27, 1964)
<http://www.americanrebels.com/>

him an enormous advantage as politics moved fully into its television era. His mastery of the television medium earned for him the title, “the great communicator” (Wiggins).

Referring to the speeches of the most famous orators among American presidents such as John Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and some others, we can conclude that they professionally mastered the skills of rhetorical tones and styles. They often followed either Ciceronian tradition, which is sober, lapidary, and, at its best, characterized by an Olympian grace: “It’s time we asked ourselves if we still know the freedoms intended for us by the Founding Fathers...”¹ or Shakespeare and the King James Bible tradition which is characterized by its power upon the strength of its language and imagery.

Thus, linguistic technologies, which are based on systematic tendencies (reference to national values, repetition of the same ideas by means of various linguistic mechanisms, positioning the reader/listener, even engaging the co-participants of discourse into discussion) help politicians to exercise their political power. In the linguistic sense, the semantics of speeches is politically crucial and socially important.

Today, American politicians, as well as many Russian ones, are purposely changing these traditions in oratory by making their speeches less standard (folksy), embracing informality, and drawing nearer to more authentic and more “natural” humanity. One of the speechwriters wrote about President George H. W. Bush, who was often in direct contact with his speechwriters. President George H. W. Bush used to say very often «Too much rhetoric!», “too highfalutin’, too flowery. He liked very plain language” (Patterson).

Russian president Vladimir Putin, on the other hand, has even been criticized for using “too

plain language” in his speeches, expressions like “wiping them out in the shit house” embarrassed not only some liberal politicians in Russia, but a lot of foreign journalists as well. Prof Robert Russell, the head of the Russian department at Sheffield University, said: “Like Khrushchev, Putin has an earthy turn of phrase. It means people see him as one of their own. He’s always controlled and usually rather unemotional but there’s something else Russians respond to, something more visceral. I think he does these things deliberately for that reason” (Straus, 2003). Despite some kind of informality in his speeches, V. Putin can hardly speak the way Zhirinovskiy (a political leader of one of the Liberal parties in Russia) does in public. Putin V.V. is always aware of the fact that he speaks on behalf of the country he represents, and he never goes beyond his social intelligence.

These examples show that though a lot of politicians use the same technology (deliberate simplicity of speech); every politician has his own individual style and discourse restrictions, which is the problem of social rhetoric, political culture and even the level of education. As a result of our critical discourse analysis, we came to the conclusion that linguistic technologies in political discourse might be of universal, national or even personal character.

Inaugural addresses of different presidents, for example, might be a perfect illustration to this statement. In spite of a very traditional format of the inaugural address (universal approach), every president tries to create something special to be memorable (personal approach). Even in Russia everybody remembers that those words “And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man” belong to J.F.Kennedy. Unforgettable words of Bill Clinton

¹ R. Reagan, (Speech. October 27,1964)
<http://www.americanrebels.com/>

have been quoted by many people “We must do what America does best: offer more opportunity to all and demand responsibility from all”¹. American presidents in comparison with Russian ones have more experience and a great number of traditional language skills to persuade their nation that they have made a good choice of a president. The traditions of inaugural address in Russia are becoming very specific and national like (national approach). This is the first, but not the only one technology used in modern political discourse.

Further on, we would like to focus our attention on one more technology which is frequently used in many political campaigns: political image making. As we mentioned above, the change in formal rhetoric was caused by the regular and very intensive use of TV and later Internet, which has changed the mechanism of a politician’s image making. At first, those technologies help to accomplish image control by those who support this or that politician. Let’s take John F. Kennedy’s case. Though J.F. Kennedy was a questionable character, his family using the fact of assassination (violent death) as a main tool, created the image of a magical kingdom called Camelot, ruled by a prince whose wisdom and bravery saved the kingdom from tyranny and invasion of enemies. Only one conceptual metaphor *Camelot*, which was used properly in the discourse, introduced a very complicated and challenging concept (from the linguistics’ point of view) and unprecedented myth of American history (from the social point of view).

“Kennedy,” the liberal journalist Lawrence Wright has observed, “had spent thirteen years in the House and Senate without passing a single important piece of legislation. And yet before his election to the presidency, people were comparing him with Franklin Roosevelt, with

the young Churchill, with various movie stars, with Lindbergh” (**Maoz**). The concept *Kennedy and Camelot* still works with a lot of Americans who consider Kennedy to be one of the greatest Presidents of the U.S.

G. Bush Jr. has also used very successfully both verbal and nonverbal technologies on TV to popularize his image as an American patriot and “a good common guy” (the method of positive self-presentation). He deliberately spoke in Spanish on TV with Hispanic Americans (majority of minorities in the US), which caused very positive reaction on the part of his targeted audience, he uses Texas accent, contracted forms like “I’m” or “It’s, ignores the pronunciation of /g/ in “thinking-thinkin, talking-talkin” to demonstrate his commonality. Who will doubt that G. Bush Jr. is not a fighter for freedom and justice, defender of sovereignty and unity; he is making his speech on the background of 305 feet of America’s symbol of freedom, the Statue of Liberty? It is the ultimate patriotic backdrop for Mr. Bush, who speaks from Ellis Island.

It is a well known fact today that «Americans are leading busy lives, and sometimes they don’t have the opportunity to read a story or listen to an entire broadcast. But if they can have an instant understanding of what the president is talking about by seeing 60 seconds of television, you accomplish your goals as communicators. So we take it seriously” (Bumiller, 2003).

Inspiring image and laconic phrases of presidents on TV make wonders. The Bush-Cheney campaign official slogan was, “Yes, America Can!” Early Bush commercial used the tag line, “President Bush. Steady leadership in times of change.” (Presidential Campaign Slogans). In both slogans, there is a promise for the better future of all Americans. No doubt, America is strong, but it will be much stronger with a new president. The modal verb “can” shows 100 percent assurance that with that

¹ <http://www.usa-presidents.info/inaugural/clinton-1.htm>

“smart” president, America will overcome all the difficulties. The slogan “President Bush. Steady leadership in times of change” is created on the effect of contrastive meaning of two words: constant movement, on the one hand, and stability because of a strong leadership, on the other.

The image of Russian president V. Putin has been created either by his supporters or by his opponents. Most common Russians respect and even love their president. As a result, people write poems and create odes for him. There are a lot of anecdotes about Putin, which demonstrates his absolute popularity as anecdotes in Russia are created only about those people who deserve attention and are worth speaking about. His image is like “He is one of us, but at the same time he is much better than we are; therefore, he is our leader, our president.” The concept of a strong political leader dominates in Russia. According to the survey, the sociologists pointed out that more than 60% of Russian people associate their social and psychological stability with the name of Putin, his personality. Sociologists, after making various surveys, agreed that Putin represents an ideal political leader “a tough, energetic, proactive, competent politician and a decent man”. “He doesn’t have any alternative in Russia as a president of the country. He managed to create the image of a good, civil servant, who works for his country and Russian people” (Varfolomeev, 2003). The discourse technologies which are used by Putin’s supporters and himself are strong arguments about Russians’ wants, general ideological principles, charismatic leadership projection, positive self-presentation.

Quite the opposite image has been created (with the help of words and phrases) by some Mass Media institutions in the West. We analyzed some articles from Daily Telegraph and some other sources, in which the image of Putin is presented very negatively. He is called “a Russified Pinochet or Franco”, “a fully fledged

Russian führer”; his policy is associated with “a fascist regime”, “a full-scale dictatorship”, “that Putin takes the same view and that, like Hitler”, “what made Hitler such a threat to the rest of the world was his desire to extend Germany’s power beyond her own borders. Here, too, Putin fits the bill” (**Ferguson**).

Another image of Putin is a symbol of KGB power: “a 51-year-old former KGB colonel” (T. Parfitt and D. Wasstell, 2004), “Putin’s regime”, “the Russian mafia of the FSB”, “the shadows of the Kremlin” (Wansell, 2006). The supporting words that make this image even stronger are “a clique of former secret services agents”, “the diminutive judo black-belt”.

We can’t accuse those authors that they lie, but they don’t tell the whole truth being the “prophets” of the official ideology of London, they don’t give alternatives for thinking. So, as far as we can see the implicit assumption is becoming a necessary part of political discourse, which is strong and very authoritative when it is addressed to the indeterminable audience. It’s one-way discourse, from the producer to the audience. The information given about political leaders is remembered due to their ready made images in accordance with the definite ideological concept. Both images of Putin, made from different ideological perception (Russian and British) with the help of linguistic technologies, have the same referent, the same individual, president V.V. Putin, but they relate to different conceptualizations. That proves how different human minds imagine the world and communicate their imaginings. By these examples, we are just showing the alternative referential formulations made by wording and phrasing due to different concepts and values.

Visions are becoming sometimes more important than the discourse itself to increase the power and reliability. The speed of life dictates new means of communication, stronger and more illustrative persuasions. One of those is

political cartoons. We consider political cartoons as one of the linguistic technologies as well. The combination of the slogan, photos or pictures make the cartoon very effective. And in spite of the fact that most of them are very subjective as they express opinions, which can easily mislead the addressees, they are used purposely as one of the powerful tools for persuasion.

A political cartoon is a linguistic technology that makes a point about a political issue or event. Political cartoons are created by abstract visual language and messages to narrate social and political concerns. One can find them on the editorial pages of any daily newspaper, newsmagazines, and on political Web sites. Political cartoons can be very funny, especially if the issue that they are commenting on is quite understandable. Their main purpose, though, is not to amuse, but to persuade a person. A good political cartoon makes think about current events, but it also tries to sway a person's opinion toward the cartoonist's point of view, which might be professionally used by political opponents. Very often a person doesn't even realize how powerful a political cartoon is. Metaphor and symbols, irony, epithets have been repeatedly used by many different cartoonists.

A very simple example is taken from a special cartoons' web site mocking G. Bush. Jr. The one under analysis can be regarded as a piece of church sermon. It says: *War is peace; freedom is slavery;*



ignorance is strength; Bush is President. As we may see, this cartoon is based on antithesis (sharp contrast to set one thing against the other) and analogy. The author has chosen these combinations of words not accidentally: they reflect the distorted American values and unstable situation in the world caused by Bush's thoughtless actions (from the point of view of a cartoon maker). You may accept it or not, but it has a very strong influence on the public opinion.

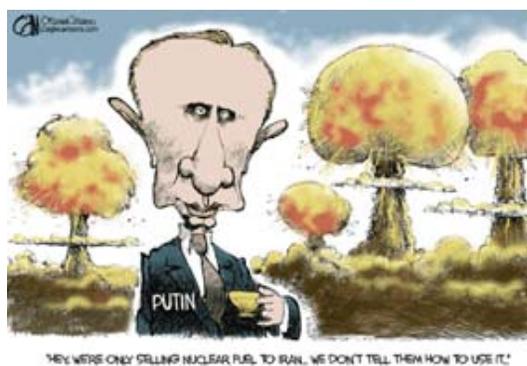
Another cartoon in the form of a road sign is purely a classical one. At first sight, it is a usual direction sign — *Connecticut Welcomes You. Birthplace of George W. Bush* — but it is accompanied with an additional phrase which makes this cartoon very humorous: *We apologize.* The question is what this apology is about. The implied



negative connotations made the whole message very ironic. But your background knowledge about the individual who is under criticism will make this cartoon more or less informative and persuasive. Linguistic technology of a political cartoon may be considered as a universal one as the metaphorical concept in most of them is understood by any addressee in spite of his national identity. The use of stylistic devices is the main language mechanism which makes this technology very effective. At

the same time cartoons may have a great number of national characteristics (the use of the national symbols and icons).

For example, if we take some cartoons about Putin, given in the foreign sources of Mass Media, very often we will find the name of Putin written somewhere on the cartoon. Not every foreigner can recognize Putin easily on the cartoon; for the



Russian audience it is not necessary. The length of the text depends on the information implied in the cartoon and the recognition of the personage. On this cartoon about Putin, we can see his name written on the pocket place and the text ““Hey we’re only selling nuclear fuel to Iran... We don’t tell them how to use it””. The content of the message is given explicitly; every one recognizes the meaning of the words without any additional cultural background knowledge.

As far as we found out, most political cartoons may be of two types: criticism is directly pointed to the personal characteristics (stupid, aggressive, cunning, etc) or to the political events in which the main character of the cartoon is involved. As for the presidents of the United States, both types of cartoons are popular. We have found a lot of examples about American president G. Bush. Jr. Some of them are very insulting from our Russian point of view, and they can hardly appear in the Russian sources of Mass Media. Russians, unlike Americans, have different understanding of the president’s role in the society. A president

in Russia is more associated with absolute power (the power of a monarch, president-tsar) . One of the Russian linguists Chudinov calls it “monarch conceptual metaphor” (Chudinov, 2006: 213). Americans perceive their president as a person chosen by them to be a top manager for a definite period of time who may be easily criticized as any other American in the country. So Americans are getting used to seeing cartoons which criticize their president on the front pages of the magazines and newspapers, like New Yorker, for example. Political cartoons are becoming more popular in American political culture than in Russian one, and the main reason of that is different national mentality on the president and presidency on the whole. In British or American Mass Media, Putin V.V. is mostly being criticized for his latest actions but not his personal drawbacks.

Thus, one of the main claims made in this article is that modern political rhetoric is becoming simpler and more accessible for ordinary people. To achieve this “close political contact” with the mass audience, politicians and their supporters use definite linguistic technologies with the help of radio, TV, and Internet. Among them are the simplicity of speech (direct appeal to ordinary people), effective image-making strategy by visual and verbal language means, the creation of effective visual products of persuasion (political advertisements and cartoons}. In spite of the universal character, all these technologies are culturally oriented and have some personal peculiarities as well. Those technologies are used in the process of the public opinion manipulation which is practically equal to the creation of political discourse. More research needs to be conducted in a variety of ways to measure the effectiveness of these and some other technologies which we managed to find out in the process of critical discourse analysis taking into consideration cognitive approach as well (Fauconnier, 1998).

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